

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION SS-30

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R 111215Z SEP 74
FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6798
INFO AMEMBASSY CAIRO

S E C R E T TUNIS 5617

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR TS US PLO
SUBJECT: GOT OFFERS FACILITATE USG TALKS WITH
PALESTINIANS

1. DURING MY MEETING SEPTEMBER 11 WITH FON MIN CHATTI
LATTER RAISED QUESTION OF USG CONTACTS WITH PALESTINIANS.
HE SAID PALESTINIAN LEADERS ARE EAGER TO OPEN DIALOGUE
WITH US AND PALESTINIAN LEADERS HAD RECENTLY ASKED
TUNISIAN GOVERNMENT TO FACILITATE PALESTINIAN CONTACTS
WITH US EMBASSY IN CAIRO. ACCORDINGLY, TUNISIAN AMBASSADOR
IN CAIRO HAD APPROACHED AMBASSADOR EILTS REQUESTING THAT
HE PUT AN AMERICAN OFFICER IN TOUCH WITH PALESTINIAN
REPRESENTATIVES IN CAIRO. CHATTI SAID WASHINGTON HAD
INFORMED AMBASSADOR HILTS THAT TIME WAS NOT RIGHT AND
CAIRO NOT THE IDEAL PLACE.

2. CHATTI ASKED THAT I PASS WORD TO THE SECRETARY
THAT WHAT TUNISIANS HAD IN MIND WAS INFORMAL,
UNOFFICIAL CONTACT AT "ANY EMBASSY LEVEL." CHATTI
UNDERSTOOD DELICACY OF MATTER AND STRESSED IMPORTANCE
OF KEEPING DISCUSSIONS SECRET. AS HE RECALLED TELL-
ING SECRETARY DURING HIS VISIT TO WASHINGTON LAST
SPRING, TUNISIA STANDS READY TO ARRANGE SUCH CONTACTS.
HE NOTED THAT FISHER (PRESUMABLY PROF ROGER FISHER)
MEETS FROM TIME TO TIME WITH BOTH PALESTINIANS AND
ISRAELIS IN AN UNOFFICIAL CAPACITY. THESE MEETINGS

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ARE VERY USEFUL AND TUNISIA COULD PERHAPS HELP USG

DEEPEN THESE CONTACTS.

3. CHATTI SAID THAT BOTH LIBYA AND ALGERIA MIGHT SEEM ON THE SURFACE TO BE BETTER POSITIONED VIS-A-VIS PALESTINIANS, BUT IN FACT TUNISIA ENJOYS STRONGER POLITICAL RELATIONS WITH THEM. REASON FOR THIS, HE CONTINUED, IS THAT LIBYA AND ALGERIA TAKE MORE EXTREMIST POSITIONS TOWARD PALESTINIAN QUESTION, WHEREAS TUNISIA FAVORS COMPROMISE--AS, HE CONTENDED, DO PALESTINIAN LEADERS. CHATTI SAID TUNISIA REFERS TO 1947 PARTITION PLAN AS "LEGAL BASIS" FOR NEGOTIATIONS BUT RECOGNIZES THAT SOMETHING LESS MUST BE SETTLED FOR. SUCH IS ALSO CASE WITH PLO LEADERS, WHO PREPARED TO ACQUIESCE IN "DIVISION OF TERRITORY." CHATTI EMPHASIZED IMPORTANCE OF SATISFYING WHAT HE CHARACTERIZED AS PALESTINIAN TERRITORIAL IMPERATIVE. CHATTI REITERATED THAT GOT IS WELL PLUGGED INTO PALESTINIAN LEADERSHIP AND MENTIONED, IN PARTICULAR, ABU AYYAD, ABU OMAR AND KHALED AL HASSAN.

4. I AVERTED TO USG POSITION THAT ROLE OF PALESTINIANS SHOULD BE DISCUSSED AT GENEVA. CHATTI SAID HE UNDERSTOOD THIS BUT GENEVA SEEMS TO BE A LONG WAY OFF. HE EXPRESSED CONCERN THAT PALESTINIAN ISSUE MIGHT GET OUT OF HAND AT UPCOMING UNGA, AND THAT THIS MAKES IT ALL THE MORE IMPORTANT THAT PALESTINIAN QUESTION BE CLARIFIED AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. IF GENEVA TALKS COULD DEAL WITH THIS QUESTION BEFORE UNGA GETS AROUND TO ISSUE, DIFFICULT PROBLEMS AT UNGA COULD BE AVOIDED.

5. COMMENT: IT IS TRUE THAT TUNISIANS HAVE GOOD CONTACTS WITH PLO LEADERSHIP AND ARE IN A POSITION TO URGE UPON LATTER A COURSE OF MODERATION. SIPCE THIS IS ALSO CASE WITH CERTAIN OTHER ARAB GOVERNMENTS CLOSER TO THE SCENE, IT IS INTERESTING THAT PLO HAS ASKED FOR TUNISIAN GOOD OFFICES.
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